

SNOQUALMIE™

Sustainability, Organics, and Snoqualmie

Nestled against the base of the Horse Heaven Hills in Prosser, Washington, Snoqualmie Winery has been making wines that reflect the balance and graceful beauty of our small-town surroundings for over three decades. As part of the winery's commitment to maintaining and advancing the natural quality of the Northwest, winemaker Joy Andersen and her team take an active interest in the local community and environment, and are continually improving Snoqualmie's sustainable and organic practices to ensure the quality of this special land for future generations.

Snoqualmie's longtime dedication to making sustainable and organically produced wines is a natural continuation of our parent company Ste. Michelle Wine Estates' commitment to using sustainable agricultural practices in all of the company's 3500 vineyard acres in Washington state.

I. SUSTAINABILITY

What is sustainability?

Sustainability aims to promote practices that are environmentally responsible, socially equitable, and economically viable in all aspects of agriculture, winemaking, and development.

A critical goal of Snoqualmie's sustainability and organics program, and these movements in general, is to reduce our "ecological footprint" – the impact our actions have on our natural surroundings. At Snoqualmie, we've always believed that taking good care of our vineyards and local environment are essential steps towards making the best wines possible. This commitment to doing right by our local community and environment forms the core of our sustainability program.

Is sustainable the same as organic?

No. While organic practices are specific to agriculture and are highly regulated by the USDA, sustainable practices apply not only to agriculture, but to packaging, fuel and waste management, and employee safety, among other things.

Does the USDA regulate compliance with sustainable practices?

Unlike organics, compliance and guidelines for sustainability are self-regulating. Along with our parent company, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, Snoqualmie has become a driving force in introducing sustainable practices into Washington's vineyards and wineries.

Kevin Corliss, Ste. Michelle's Director of Viticulture, was instrumental in the development of Vinewise, the Washington Guide to Sustainable Viticulture available online to the state's wine grape growers and vintners. Snoqualmie winemaker Joy Andersen is currently working to establish a similar set of guidelines for the state's wineries.

How does Snoqualmie practice sustainability?

Sustainability is a tool that is used in both the vineyards (through pest, soil, and water management) and the winery (through energy and water conservation, waste reduction and management, and organic winegrowing).

Sustainability in the Vineyards

The same assets that make Washington a great place to make wine – low rainfall, minimal disease and few vineyard pests, and great soil – give us an advantage in our ability to implement sustainable vineyard practices relating to water and pesticide usage.

Ste. Michelle Wine Estates' vineyard sustainability program is in place in all of the company's Washington vineyard acreage and currently focuses on three main areas in which our viticulture staff continually analyzes and fine-tunes operations: pest, soil and plant, and water management. In addition, special USDA-certified organic vineyard blocks are the sources of Snoqualmie's Naked line of organically grown wines.

Pest Management:

- Maintaining and expanding the registered virus-free mother block.
- Taking a leadership role in information sharing and assistance to contracted growers.
- Dramatically decreased use of manmade pest control agents and increased reliance on soft materials such as biodegradable soaps, oils, and plant extracts.
- Use of low-impact vehicles such as ATVs throughout the vineyards to increase fuel and work efficiency.

Soil and Plant Management:

- Reduction of soil erosion through a green cover of beneficial native grasses and cereal grains, which also provide a habitat to attract beneficial insects to the vineyards.

Water Management:

- Use of weather stations and soil moisture-measuring probes to monitor water use and ensure that grapevines don't compete with cover crops for water.
- Implementation of drip irrigation systems for increased conservation and efficiency.

Organic Winegrowing:

- In addition to the sustainable farming practices used in all of Ste. Michelle's vineyards, 378 acres (11% of the company's total owned acreage) are certified organic and used exclusively to create Snoqualmie's Naked line of organically grown wines.
- In order to be certified organic, additional, specially approved methods of pest and disease control, fertilization, and cultivation must be implemented.

Sustainability at the Winery

Snoqualmie winemaker Joy Andersen has always believed that the best wines are made with excellent grapes and little intervention or processing. This philosophy makes Andersen a natural to lead Ste. Michelle's sustainability and organics efforts at Snoqualmie.

Andersen and her team are currently focused on increasing natural and sustainable methods in three major aspects of winery operations: energy conservation, winery water conservation and quality and solid waste reduction and management.

Energy Conservation:

- In 2005-2006, the winery decreased energy use 6% from 2004-2005.
- A move from propane-powered to battery-powered forklifts in the cellar and installation of new, energy-efficient lighting and motion light sensors were keys to energy conservation.

Winery Water Conservation and Quality:

- From 2004-2005 to 2005-2006, water use at the winery dropped 8%.
- Conservation efforts include
 - Employee education
 - Use of new, water-conserving nozzles on all hoses
 - Storing operational waste water on-site in retention pools which naturally evaporate throughout the year
 - Planting water-efficient landscaping around winery grounds.

Solid Waste Reduction & Management:

- Marketing materials and wine packaging are created in partnership with environmentally-friendly vendors using recycled paper and, in some cases, vegetable-based inks.
- The winery recycling program includes paper, cardboard, and aluminum waste products.
- Grape pomace – organic materials such as grape skins and pulps leftover from the winemaking process – is sold and recycled for use as fertilizer and livestock feed.

II. ORGANICS

What is Organic?

The term “organic” refers to the way agricultural products such as produce and wine are grown and processed. In order to use the term “organic,” a product must be farmed, produced, and certified according to a strict set of guidelines regulated by the USDA relating to use of natural alternatives to manmade pest control agents, herbicides, and fertilizers. These guidelines assure consumers that the product maintains the organic integrity that begins on the farm or, in our case, the vineyard.

What is an organic wine?

An organic wine is defined by the USDA’s National Organic Program as "a wine made from organically grown grapes *and* without any added sulfites". By this restriction, if sulfites are added, the wine is referred to as "wines made from organic grapes" (or organically grown grapes.)

What are Snoqualmie’s Naked and Nearly Naked wines?

Snoqualmie’s Naked and Nearly Naked wines are produced from 100% organically grown grapes from our certified organic vineyards in Washington state. The wines are produced and bottled in an organically certified facility, following all of the processing guidelines set forth by the USDA for organic wines.

Snoqualmie Naked and Nearly Naked wines contain minimal added sulfites, within specific organic guidelines, to preserve the shelf life and to help retain their fresh and fruity quality. Naked wines contain less than 65 parts per million of sulfites (SO₂), compared to conventionally produced white wines which typically contain 80-100 parts per million of SO₂.

Why do we add sulfites?

Sulfites are a natural by-product of fermentation, and all wines naturally contain about 8-40 parts per million of SO₂. Additionally many foods such as dried fruits, some fish and shellfish, and soy products naturally contain some sulfites. The minimal sulfites that we add to our Naked wines contribute to the taste, preservation, and aroma of the wines as well as inhibiting bacterial spoilage and oxidation. Sulfites have been used for centuries to protect wine from spoilage, and because of the alcohol and pH qualities of wine, only a small amount is needed to ensure stability.

III. FUTURE GOALS

Sustainability is not a process that happens overnight. Rather, a commitment to sustainability involves continual re-assessment and implementation of new ideas in a continuing quest to ensure the quality and availability of our natural resources for generations to come.

In the upcoming year, both Ste. Michelle Wine Estates and Snoqualmie Winery will seek to further our sustainable and organic practices in a variety of ways. Future goals for our viticulture team include:

- Development of an organic technical internship to encourage education and practical experience in organic viticulture for current enology and viticulture students.
- Use of bio-fuel, a renewable energy source derived from organic materials, in vineyard vehicles on a trial basis during the 2007 harvest.
- Addition of additional certified organic acreage to support Snoqualmie's organic program of Naked wines.
- Completion of a Washington Associate of Wine Grape Growers self-assessment in sustainable methods for the 2008 season.
- Work with the Department of Wildlife to manage non-vineyard landscaping for increased wildlife and habitat.

In addition to these goals, Snoqualmie Winery has set its sight on further reducing its ecological footprint by:

- Researching other forms of alternative power, such as solar energy, to run the cellar pumps and heat the water needed for our winemaking processes.
- Continued water conservation and management through cleaning and recycling of waste water for re-use in the vineyards or reparation of neighboring wetlands.
- Creation of a glass recycling program at the facility to accompany the existing paper, cardboard, and aluminum recycling programs and dramatically cut down on waste from the bottling line and cellar.